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JUDICIAL BRANCH

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Testimony of Stephen N. Ment
Veterans Affairs Committee Public Hearing
February 17, 2015

**House Bill 6370, An Act Concerning The Establishment Of A Task Force
To Examine The Creation Of A Veterans Treatment Pilot**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on behalf of the Judicial Branch concerning *House Bill 6370, An Act Concerning The Establishment of a Task Force to Examine the Creation of a Veterans Treatment Pilot*. The proposed bill would study the implementation of a veteran's treatment court pilot program, and would contemplate the creation of a separate docket to address certain criminal matters pertaining to discharged members of the United States military.

The Judicial Branch stands ready to engage in a discussion on how to best meet the needs of returning veterans who find themselves involved with the criminal justice system. In previous years, the Branch has participated in discussions, and implemented, legislative initiatives that allow veterans to utilize the existing Accelerated Rehabilitation Program more than once, and that allow veterans with mental health conditions amenable to treatment to access the Supervised Divisorary Program. We have appreciated being part of the discussion.

In addition to the above, the Judicial Branch's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) have partnered on a jail diversion program for veterans in the New London Judicial District, and have already begun discussions on expanding this program to other locations.

Judges are acutely aware that issues presented by veterans often require treatment, not incarceration.

Moving forward, the Judicial Branch would be pleased to continue the careful review on how to best meet the needs of returning veterans. However, the Judicial Branch opposes the creation of specialized dockets - and has done so consistently in a number of areas - because these dockets often require additional resources and personnel and limit the Chief Court Administrator's ability to manage the Judicial Branch. It would be the Branch's preference to address the needs that are articulated in this proposal within our existing infrastructure.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on this bill, and again, the Judicial Branch would be pleased to work with the proponents to address any unmet needs.